DOCUMENT RESUME

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ABSTRACT

A compulsory freshman orientation program at Tarrant County Junior College (Texas) required 18 hours of class contact. During the first two weeks of the program, freshmen were presented with general information about the college and introduced to college administrators. During the last six weeks, the students scheduled 10 hours (in any combination) of the subjects offered that they thought would be helpful to them. On the average, students completed 15 of the first 16 hours in the program, although six per cent failed to complete the course. A table of student evaluations of the individual programs is included, and on the basis of these evaluations, several changes will be made in future programs. (RC)

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NEEDS ORIENTATION

Tarrant County Junior College
Northeast Campus

During the Spring semester of 1968-69, the staff of the Counseling and Behavioral Science Department discussed the compulsory freshman orientation program and its obvious problems and shortcomings. The program was traditional--lectures, films, work sheets covering study habits, professor evaluation, note-taking, and an introduction to key administrative personnel. The staff lectured; the students sat. Attendance in orientation classes left much to be desired and staff attitudes toward meeting these classes were less than enthusiastic!

Evaluation of the classes revealed that students saw a need for "some type" of orientation, had many needs that were not being met, and were willing to make positive suggestions short of "junk it".

The evaluation results were submitted to the staff and approximately three months of brainstorming followed, operating on the premises that orientation to each student could have a different connotation, that needs varied and that students would act responsibly in determining their own needs.

The staff then began to put together ideas: effective listening program smaller groups, use of films, encounter groups, a reading lab, shorter programs, longer programs, no programs, etc. A program that would permit student choice and faculty involvement finally began to emerge. The program that developed consisted of three major phases: two weeks of introduction to the college, six weeks of special activities, and two evaluation meetings for a total of 18 hours of class contact.

Orientation classes were scheduled with 80 students in each class. Two sections met MWF 8:00-9:00, two met MWF 1:00-2:00, and two met on TTH 12:15-1:30. (See Fig. 1)

Figure #1

M	T	W	TH	F
1(80)		1		1
2(80)		2		2
	5(80)		5	
	6(80)		6	
3(80)		3		3
4(80)		4		4

This scheduling permitted optimum flexibility. Sections scheduled for the same time bloc could be combined, bringing together 160 students for general presentations, or divided into four classes of 40 students or eight classes of 20.

During the first two weeks most sections were consolidated. The students met the President, Dean of Instruction, Dean of Student Services, Director of Student Activities, President of the Student Government Association, Director of Intramurals, Director of Student Publications, and Director of Counseling.

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At the end of this period the students were presented with the program for the next six weeks. They were required to schedule 10 hours of any combination of the following subjects.

1. EFFECTIVE LISTENING - 4 hours - This program was developed by the Xerox Company to assist individuals in listening comprehension. Most people do not fully understand all they hear and often misinterpret information. Improvement in note-taking and assimilation of new knowledge were desired results.

2. STUDY HABITS - 2 hours - Habits form the backbone of study. No one is born with good or bad study habits. This program evaluated study habits and presented ways to organize and improve study. This group worked with check lists, participated in discussions, and observed demonstrations.

3. CAREER OPPORTUNITIES - 4 hours - Many older people are pursuing careers by "accident" or "necessity". In our present society there are possibly twenty times more kinds of careers than existed ten years ago. Each division and department on our campus represents dozens of careers. In these sessions, students were given the opportunity to complete a vocational interest test, meet with faculty panels, and discuss job qualifications.

4. LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER - 2 hours - TCJC's Learning Resource Center and Media Center approaches being a "miracle". The potential source of knowledge for a student is unlimited. Students were introduced to the library and media center equipment materials, and opportunities for independent study.

5. HEALTH - 2 hours - This program was designed for students who wanted to learn more about physical health and body care. It was under the direction of the Health Services staff.

6. DRAFT AND MILITARY SERVICE - 1 hour - Dissemination of information concerning the draft, military service, Reserves, and ROTC was the purpose of this session. No effort was made to evaluate any of these programs. The student received detailed information on classification and student deferrment.

7. WORK, LOANS, SCHOLARSHIP, VA BENEFITS - 1 hour - Probably the most overlooked aspect of college life is the financial aid available to a student where actual need exists. In this session, the Director of Financial Aids answered questions concerning ways and means of securing part-time work, loans, etc.

8. READING LAB - 5 hours - Reading instructors met with those interested in the Reading Lab. Students were tested and suggestions were given for improvement of their reading level (speed, comprehension, and vocabulary). This session did not serve as a substitute for the regular developmental reading course.

9. MATH LAB - 5 hours - In this group, the faculty of the Mathematics Department assisted students in evaluating concepts and habits of learning mathematics. For the person with a "fear of math", this was a good investment of time.

10. FILMS - 1-5 hours - Ten films which seemed to be of contemporary interest were shown. Examples were: "LSD-Insight or Insanity", "The Communication Explosion", "Psychological Differences Between the Sexes", and "Measure of a Man" (self-image). A brief discussion followed each showing.

11. MARATHON - 10 hours - Three groups composed of 12 students each met on campus in the Student Center and in the Counseling-Behavioral Science office on a designated Saturday. The objective was to give each participant an opportunity to discuss fears, anxieties, goals, etc., and possibly find some answers concerning life and its meaning for him.

The sections described above were arranged on a staggered schedule throughtout a period of six weeks. Several of the sections were presented two and three times. Careers, health, military service, reading lab, and math lab, however, were presented only once.

Anticipated problems included attendance records, overloaded sections, student interest in certain topics, and lost schedules for students. Only one major problem developed--attendance records. A roll was developed for each section which was turned into the department office for posting on a master roll. This turned into a monumental task. Some students failed to get their names on the correct roll or the teacher failed to take roll. Only six students failed to make an adequate schedule. While the films were well accept[illegible], six of the ten scheduled were somewhat dated and the students reacted to long skirts, etc. Th y did however, respond to the themes and with the newer films [illegible]s, participated in discussions. The military section was almost a disaster because of the pending change in the draft laws and the concellation of Selective Service Board participation. In some sections (such as the Math Lab) student needs were not always clear.

Evaluation of the program was conducted on the last day. Students evaluated their particular program as A (excellent), C (average or good), and F (poor or useless). By combining A and C we had an indicator of acceptance, F indicated program failure. The results are seen below:

	A & C	F
1. Eff. Listening	98%	2%
2. Study Habits	76%	24%
3. Careers	73%	27%
4. Learning Resource Center	98%	2%
5. Health	76%	24%
6. Military	52%	48%
7. Financial Aid	70%	30%
8. Reading Lab	84%	16%
9. Math Lab	68%	32%
10. Films	80%	20%
11. Marathon	85%	15%

Interpretation of the evaluation was made in light of new program, previous attitudes concerning orientation, and material presented in each section.

In our next attempt we will make the following changes:

2. Study Habits will be expanded to 3 hours.
3. Careers will make use of business and professional persons rather than faculty. More detailed information will be presented, also.
4. Learning Resource Center will be expanded to 4 hours.
5. Health will be on a personal counseling level.
6. Military will be deleted.
10. Films will be updated.

The other sections will remain essentially the same with some revision in course content.

Average attendance for the first 16 hours was 15 hours per student. Many students completed as many as 18 to 20 hours. Only 6% failed to complete the course. Compared to previous records, much progress had been made.